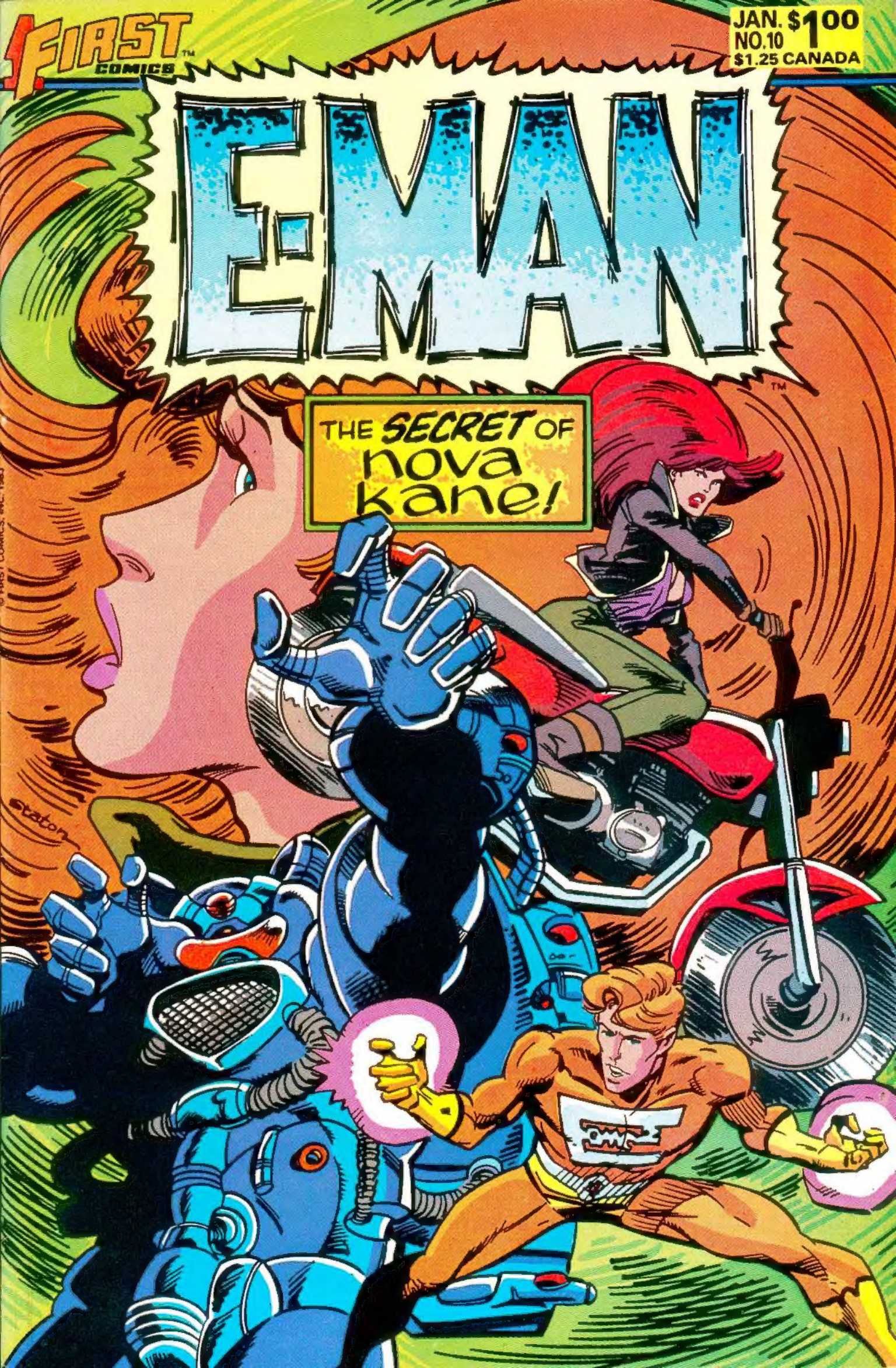
FIRST COMICS
JAN. $1.00
NO.10
$1.25 CANADA
E-MAN
THE SECRET OF nova kane!
eaton

FIRST™ NOTES

49 MILLION MILES AND 10,000 YEARS!

This month, First Comics launches its most ambitious new title yet — **Mars!**

Instead of pseudo-science fiction concepts (which, admittedly, we enjoy as much as the next comics fan) and vengence-seeking, costumed, mutated humanoids (which we likewise enjoy), **Mars** is the story of one woman, a scientist crippled in a horrible accident which took the life of her father. Resolved to take on her father's work, Morgana Trace moves to the lighter-gravity conditions of the moon, an environment where she once again can use her legs.

But her stay on the moon is shortened by a unique mission to Mars — a mission with the purpose of artificially restructuring the Red Planet, to bio-engineer it into a planet capable of supporting human life.

The Mars mission crew continues with its scientific work until, one day, all contact with the planet Earth is abruptly and completely cut off ... and the Mars crew is forced to begin 10,000 years of suspended animation!

When she awakes, Morgana finds herself *alone* on the starship — her fellow crew members having mysteriously disappeared. Bereft of all provisions, her only choice is to take her robot and land on the newly restructured planet.

But Morgana *isn't* alone on the planet Mars ... and what awaits on her new home is something more dangerous and more fascinating than the most cosmic menace usually found in "s-f" comics.

Mars is the creation of **Mark Wheatley** and **Marc Hempel,** whose work has graced (among other publications) many an issue of Heavy Metal and Epic Illustrated.

All of this science fiction action is to be found underneath a *full-color* cover by Wheatley and Hempel.

One thing's for sure — you've never before seen a comic book like **Mars.**

ARTIST-GO-ROUND

Thought you might like to be kept abreast of a couple of changes in the First Comics line-up.

Last month, **Leslie Zahler** took over as **American Flagg!** colorist. Everything else remains the same — **Howard Chaykin's** writing and drawing and **Ken Bruzenak's** lettering.

(By the way, I should point out that I've never before seen so much mail directed to the letterer of a comic book — but that's what's been happening on **American Flagg!** Ken Bruzenak has been doing such a knock-out job we could fill an entire letters page, and then some, strictly with LOC's praising Ken. Nice going, K.B!)

Next month, **Bruce Patterson** is inking **Lenin Delsol's** final **Starslayer** story. The following month — in issue #14 — **Timothy Truman** will be taking over the pencil/inking chores on both **Starslayer** and **Grimjack.** Tim's work on Grimjack (in the back of **Starslayer**) has generated a great deal of positive fan mail even at this early date.

And, since the whole **Starslayer** crew arrives on Cynosure that month, don't be too surprised if you happen across a booklength Starslayer/Grimjack story before too long.

Lenin's not hurting for work, though, because he's taken over the pencils *and* inks on the new Outrider feature in **Warp,** starting in **Warp** #11.

Joe Staton had so much fun writing **E-Man** #9 that he's plotting next month's issue — #11 — and taking over as writer full-time with the following issue! Expect the return of super-villainess Tyger Lili before too long.

Of course, **Jerry Bingham** takes over the pencils on **Warp** with next month's issue (we're doing our second **Warp Special** this month), our first post-adaptation issue. **Peter Gillis** and **Mike Gustovich** continue on as writer and inker, respectively.

— Mike Gold

ON SALE NOW

American Flagg! #4: O.K., there's this illegal basketball team, you see, that's playing in Havana, and Flagg has figured out the link between basketball and the subliminal messages planted within the Bob Violence show. If you haven't discovered why **Howard Chaykin's** monthly has become the most talked-about new book of the year ... don't say we didn't warn you!

Jon Sable, Freelance #8: If you think a run-of-the-mill resort-town safe robbery is going to turn into anything less than an international attempt at nuclear blackmail, you haven't been reading **Mike Grell's Jon Sable, Freelance** the past six months. Which is too bad ... 'cuz the early issues are commanding top-dollar on the back issue market!

Warp Special #2: It's the original Lord Cumulus in the spotlight this time, as we delve into the origins of Sargon, Mistress of War and the dangerously bizarre Dagon. This is the second "pre-quel" issue of Warp-history, and it introduces Lady Meroe — one hell of a ... lady??? Written by **Peter Gillis** and drawn by **Mark** (Conan) **Silvestri** and **Mike Gustovich.**

Mars #1: Here it all begins! Classic science fiction, as never before seen on the comics page! Meet Morgana Trace, a young scientist who's amazing adventures take her from Earth to the Moon to Mars, from the near-present day to a time 10,000 years in the future. Created, written and drawn by **Mark Wheatley** and **Marc Hempel.**

Starslayer #12: On their way to Cynosure, Tamara gets kidnapped and Torin and Crayne get caught up in the wildest car chase in comics history! Plus: the first chapter in the latest **Grimjack** thriller ... "Buried Past!" Both written by **John Ostrander; Starslayer** is drawn by **Lenin Delsol** and **Mike Gustovich,** Grimjack by **Timothy Gruman.**

Rick Obadiah, Publisher

Mike Gold, Managing Editor
Joe Staton, Art Director
Rick Oliver, Associate Editor
Bruce Patterson, Production Coordinator

Richard Felber, Business Manager
Kathy Kotsivas, Office Manager

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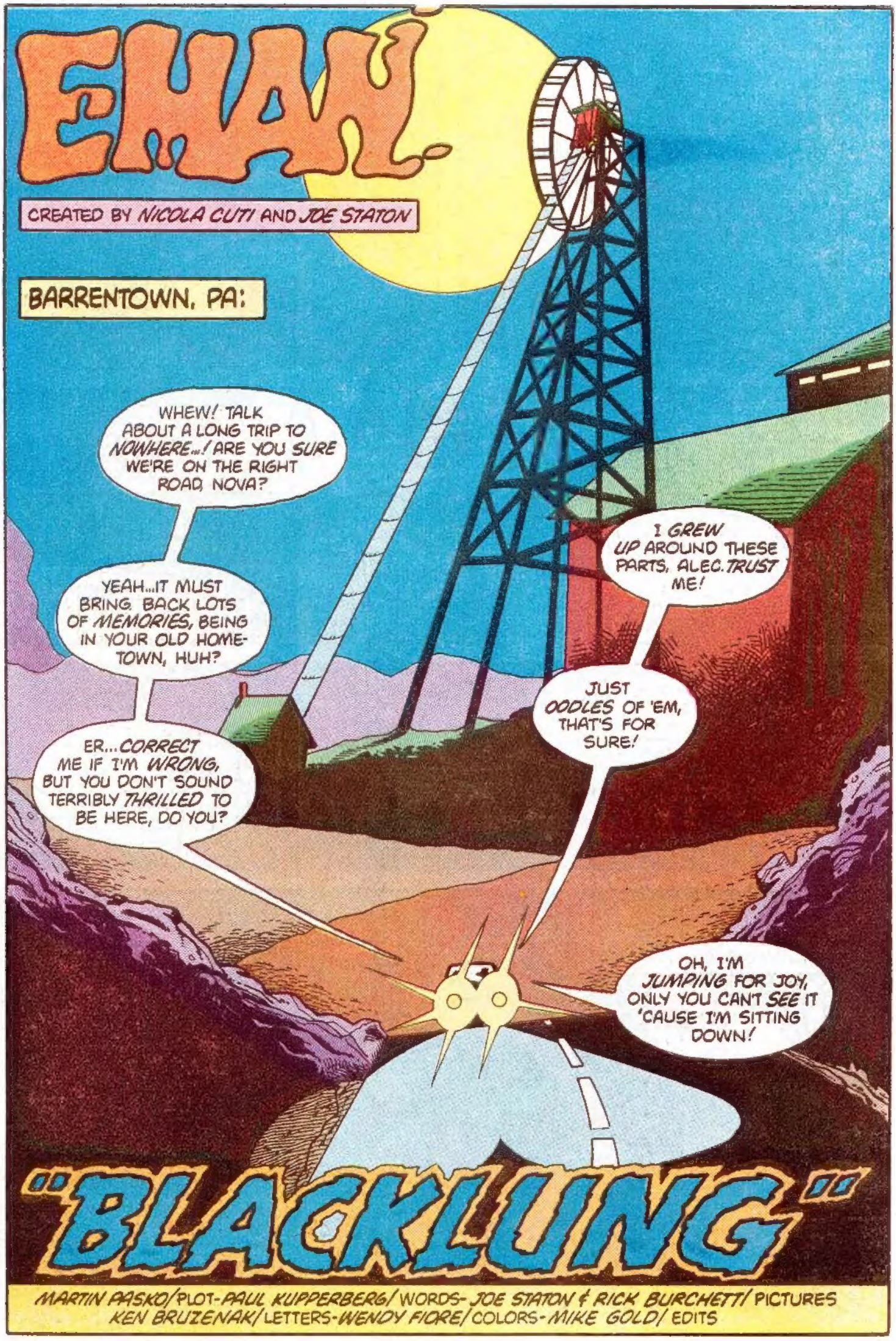
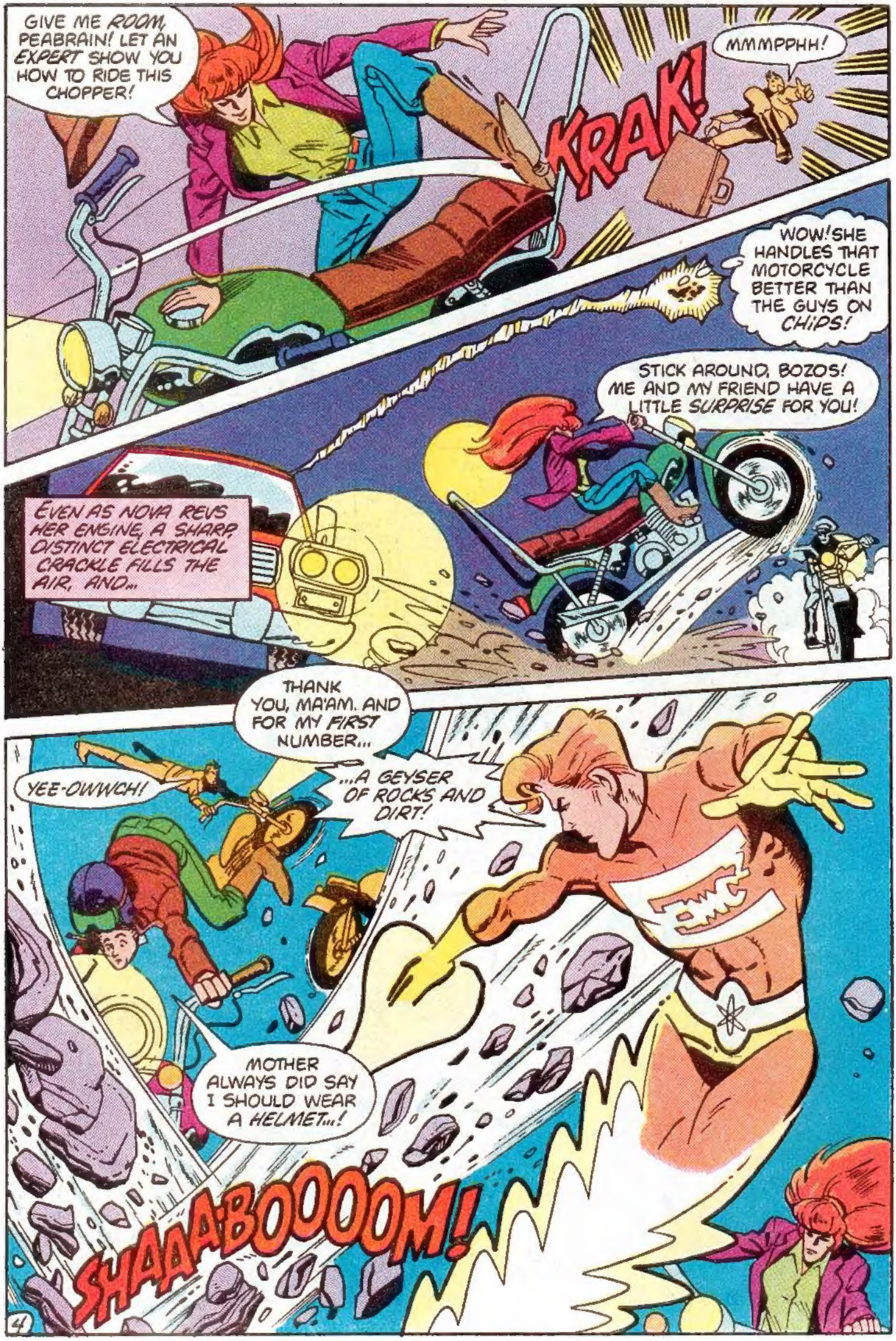

EHAW
CREATED BY NICOLA CUTI AND JOE STATON
BARRENTOWN, PA:
WHEW! TALK ABOUT A LONG TRIP TO NOWHERE...! ARE YOU SURE WE'RE ON THE RIGHT ROAD, NOVA?
YEAH...IT MUST BRING BACK LOTS OF MEMORIES, BEING IN YOUR OLD HOME-TOWN, HUH?
ER...CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT YOU DON'T SOUND TERRIBLY THRILLED TO BE HERE, DO YOU?
I GREW UP AROUND THESE PARTS, ALEC. TRUST ME!
JUST OODLES OF 'EM, THAT'S FOR SURE!
OH, I'M JUMPING FOR JOY, ONLY YOU CAN'T SEE IT 'CAUSE I'M SITTING DOWN!
"BLACKLUNG"
MARTIN AASKO/PLOT-PAUL KUPPERBERG/WORDS-JOE STATON & RICK BURCHETT/PICTURES
KEN BRUZENAK/LETTERS-WENDY FIORE/COLORS-MIKE GOLD/EDITS

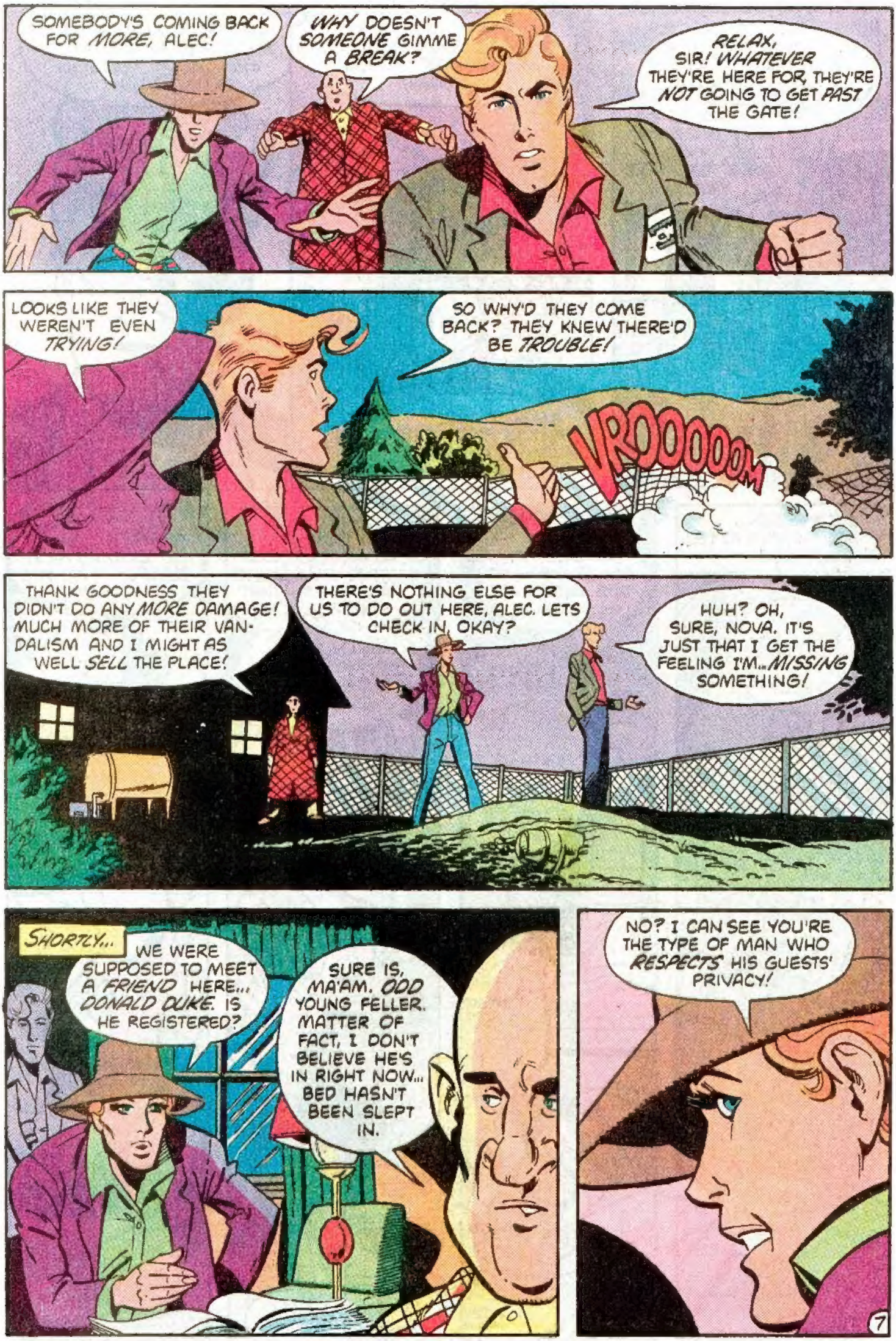
HEY! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SNAP AT ME. THIS WASN'T MY IDEA, Y'KNOW!
I...OHHH... YOU'RE RIGHT, ALEC. I'M SORRY--
--BUT I GUESS I'M WORRIED ABOUT DONALO DUKE BEING HERE AHEAD OF US. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HIS UNCLE, MIKE MAUSER, HAD IN MIND WHEN HE SENT HIM HERE--
--BUT HE COULD BE WALKING INTO SOME HEAVY-DUTY TROUBLE!
ANTHRACITE MOTEL
AUTOMOBILE TIRES CRUNCH OMINOUSLY IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT OVER THE GRAVEL DRIVEWAY--
WELL, I KNOW WHAT MAUSER WAS THINKING, NOVA... AND IT WASN'T NICE!
--BUT NOT TOO OMINOUSLY TO COVER...
WHAT'S THAT NOISE COMING FROM THE BACK OF THE MOTEL?
UH-OH! I RECOGNIZE THAT SOUND--
"--AND IT'S ALL PART OF THE TROUBLE I WAS TALKING ABOUT...MOTORCYCLE ENGINES!"
YAAAA-HOO! EAT MAH DUST!
BORN TO BE WI-I-I-I-I-ILD!
EVR'Y BUDDY MAHK WAY FER THE HELL'S HORNETS!
2

CHARMING!
QUICK, NOVA... PULL OVER AROUND THE SIDE!
AND WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO?
"NEED YOU ASK?"
LOOKIT, FELLER HORNETS! WE GOT US SOME COMPANY...
...OF THE FEE-MALE VARIETY!
HOWDY, SWEET THING! CARE TO HOP ON MAH HOG AND DO A L'IL SQUEALIN'! HAR HAR HAR!
GEE, FRANKLY, BUSTER, I'D RATHER KISS A TOAD!
OOOOO, YER A REAL SMARTMOUTH, AIN'TCHA! WELL, I KNOWS HOW TO HANDLE GUTSY BROADS--
--JEST TH' WAY THEY LIKES IT!
SHEESH!
EAT SAMSONITE, SLUG!
GRMMPH!
WHAK!
3


GIVE ME ROOM, PEABRAIN! LET AN EXPERT SHOW YOU HOW TO RIDE THIS CHOPPER!
KRAK!
MMMPPHH!
WOW! SHE HANDLES THAT MOTORCYCLE BETTER THAN THE GUYS ON CHiPS!
STICK AROUND, BOZOS! ME AND MY FRIEND HAVE A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR YOU!
EVEN AS NOVA REVS HER ENGINE, A SHARP, DISTINCT ELECTRICAL CRACKLE FILLS THE AIR, AND...
THANK YOU, MA'AM. AND FOR MY FIRST NUMBER...
...A GEYSER OF ROCKS AND DIRT!
YEE-OWWCH!
MOTHER ALWAYS DID SAY I SHOULD WEAR A HELMET...!
SHAAA-BOOOOM!
4

CAN'T YOU GUYS TAKE A HINT? IF YOU STICK AROUND HERE, YOU'RE GOING TO GET HURT!
DON'T COUNT ON US BEIN' THE ONES WHUT GETS HOIT, DUDE!
ZAAAP
HE'S CHARGING ME AT FULL THROTTLE-!
CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN HIM!
SIZZLE
LOOK, DON'T GET TERRIBLY EXCITED OR ANYTHING... I'M JUST CHARGING YOUR BIKE WITH SOME KINETIC ENERGY-
"-KIND OF LIKE GIVING YOUR ENGINE A BOOST... WITH ABOUT 10,000 HORSEPOWER!"
YIKES!
MUSTN'T LITTER!
BLAST!
FOR THIS I GAVE UP WORKING 2 MILES DOWN IN THE MINES?
5

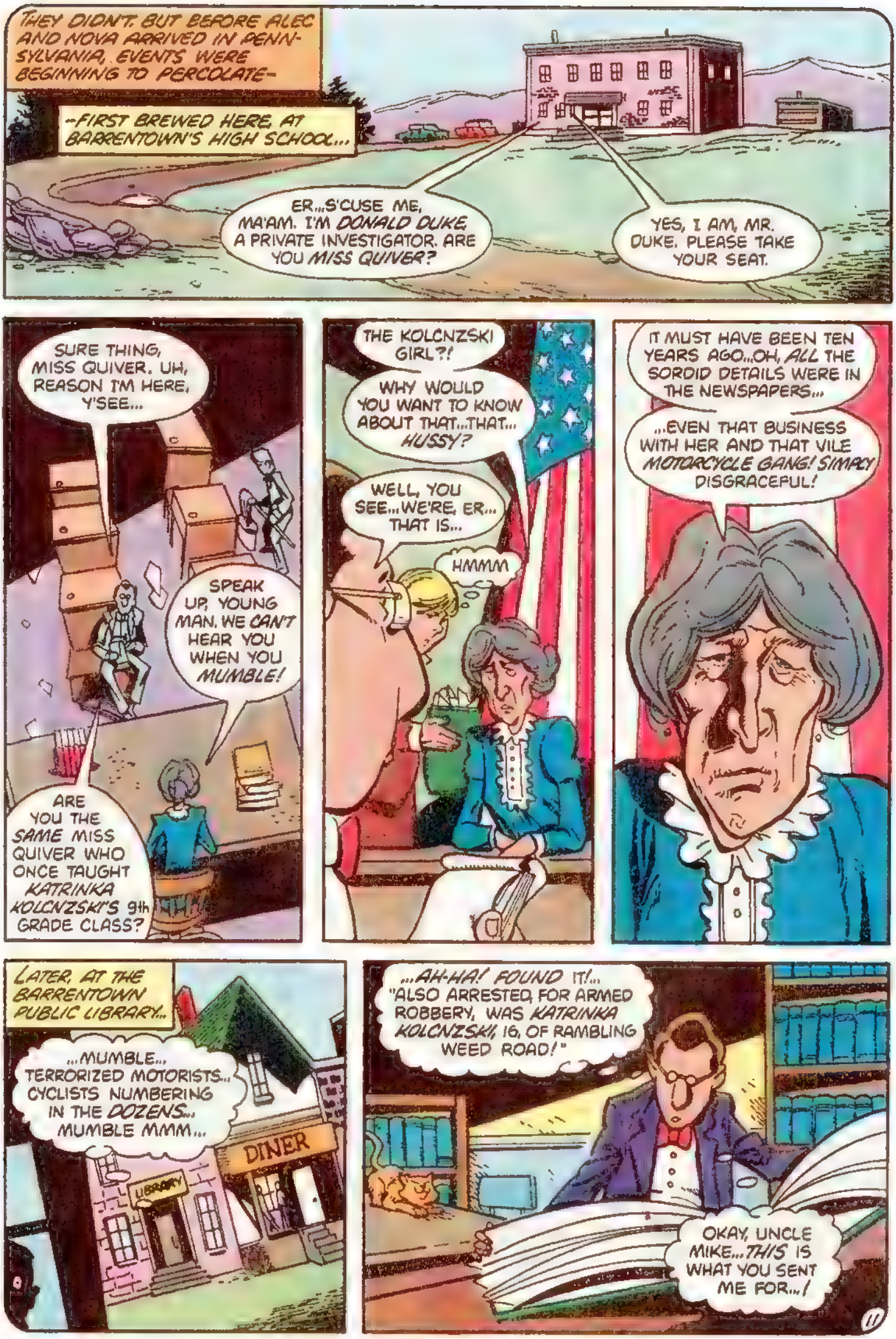
IS..IS DAT GUY FOR REAL...?
I DON'T EVEN WANNA KNOW, MAN-
-AN' I AIN'T STICKING AROUND TO FIND OUT, NEITHER! I'M HAULING MY TAILPIPES OUTTA HERE...!
YOU...YOU... HOODLUMS!
MISCREANTS!
VANDALS!
VISIGOTHS!
...CREEPS! WHO'D YOU THINK'S GOT TO CLEAN UP THIS FURSCHLUGGINER MESS YOU LEFT?!?
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT, SIR. I GUESS IT'S PARTLY, ER...MY FAULT.
HUH?! OH, T-THAT'S OKAY, LADY..BUT WHO WAS THAT GUY IN THE ORANGE P.J.s ?
WHAT GUY?
THAT ONE...I MEAN, THE ONE THAT WAS THERE BUT THEN FLEW AWAY AND ISN'T THERE ANYMORE! IN...IN...THE...ORANGE P.J.s...
WHAT P.J.s?
MAN SAYS HE SAW A GUY FLYING IN HIS NIGHTSHIRT!
YEAH? WHAT WAS A FLYING MAN DOING IN YOUR NIGHTSHIRT?
YEAH, BUT, I...AT LEAST, I THINK I...
VUUUROOM
6

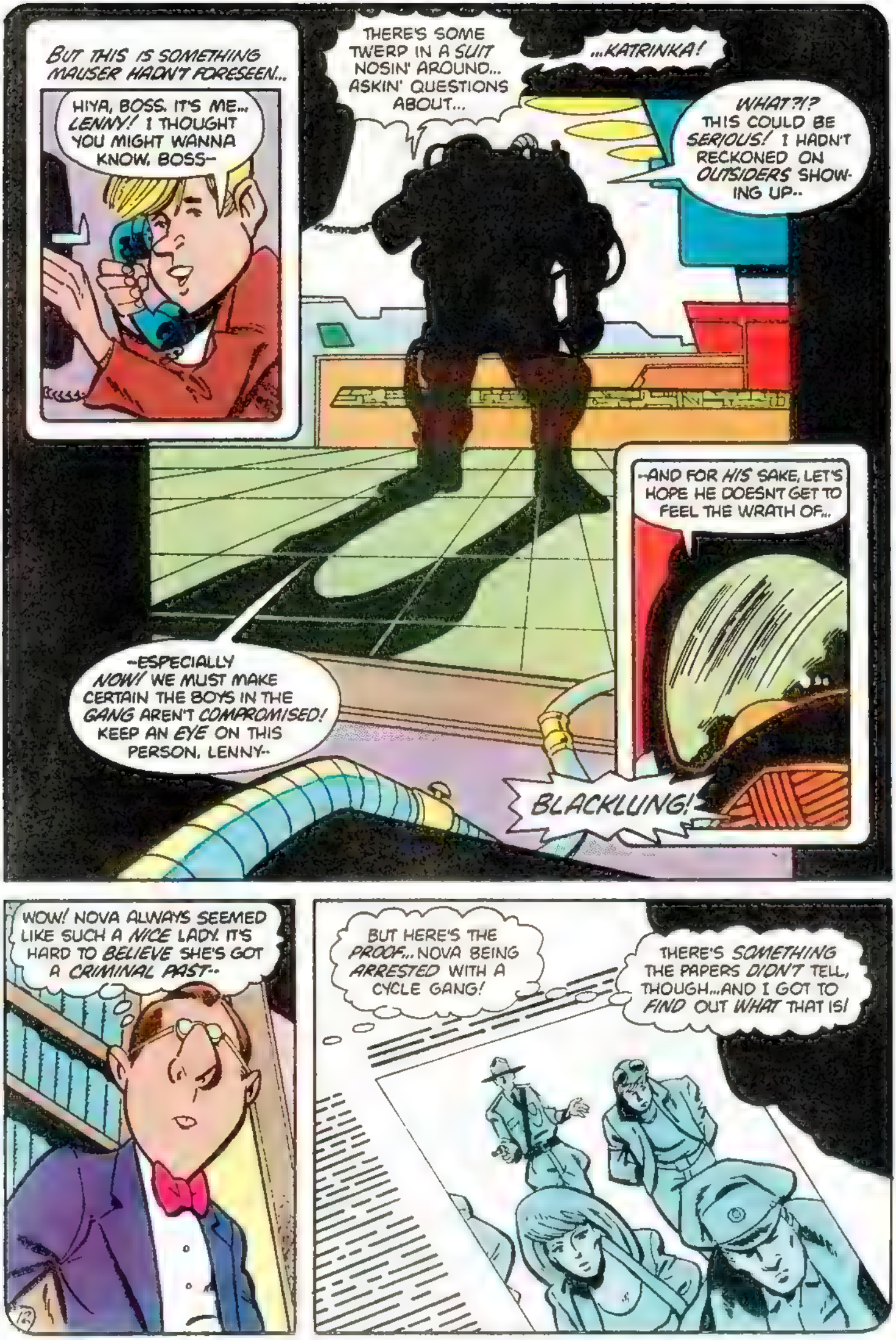

SOMEBODY'S COMING BACK FOR MORE, ALEC!
WHY DOESN'T SOMEONE GIMME A BREAK?
RELAX, SIR! WHATEVER THEY'RE HERE FOR, THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GET PAST THE GATE!
LOOKS LIKE THEY WEREN'T EVEN TRYING!
SO WHY'D THEY COME BACK? THEY KNEW THERE'D BE TROUBLE!
VROOOOOM
THANK GOODNESS THEY DIDN'T DO ANY MORE DAMAGE! MUCH MORE OF THEIR VANDALISM AND I MIGHT AS WELL SELL THE PLACE!
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR US TO DO OUT HERE, ALEC. LETS CHECK IN, OKAY?
HUH? OH, SURE, NOVA. IT'S JUST THAT I GET THE FEELING I'M...MISSING SOMETHING!
SHORTLY...
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET A FRIEND HERE... DONALD DUKE. IS HE REGISTERED?
SURE IS, MA'AM. ODD YOUNG FELLER. MATTER OF FACT, I DON'T BELIEVE HE'S IN RIGHT NOW... BED HASN'T BEEN SLEPT IN.
NO? I CAN SEE YOU'RE THE TYPE OF MAN WHO RESPECTS HIS GUESTS' PRIVACY!

ALRIGHT, NOVA. BARRENTOWN IS YOUR TERRITORY; SO WHERE COULD DONALD BE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?
HE COULD BE ANYWHERE, ALEC. I LEFT HERE A LONG TIME AGO, Y'KNOW!
THAT DOESN'T STOP YOU FROM KNOWING ABOUT SOME MYSTERIOUS TROUBLE IN TOWN!
LOOK, I JUST WANT TO FIND DONALD AND GET HIS BUNS OUT OF HERE, OKAY?
WHY'RE YOU BEING SO SECRETIVE, NOVA? WHY'S EVERYBODY BEING SO WEIRD...YOU--
"-MIKE MAUSER... NOBODY WANTS TO TELL ME ANYTHING..."
I'M TELLIN' YOU, KID, YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME...!
I DON'T THINK SO, MIKE--
I MEAN, SOMEBODY'S GOT TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS ONCE IN A WHILE!
I DON'T MEAN THAT, TRONN... ALTHOUGH I'VE GOTTA ADMIT, IT SEEMS LIKE A LOST CAUSE TO ME--
-I'M TALKING ABOUT THIS SUPER HERO PHASE OF YOURS. WHAT'RE YOU FOOLING AROUND WITH THAT GARBAGE FOR--
--WHEN I'M OFFERING YOU A FULL-TIME CAREER AS A P.I.?!
BECAUSE I AM A SUPERHERO, MIKE.
IT IS TO LAUGH, TRONN! HA...HA... HA! YOU'D DO MORE GOOD AS A PRIVATE DICK!
NOVA SEEMS TO THINK I DO MY-SELF PROUD AS E-MAN!

NOVA DOES, HUH?
HOT SPIT, KID. WHAT IS THAT KANE BROAD...YOUR MOTHER? WHEN'RE YOU GONNA STOP TAKING ORDERS FROM HER?
NOVA DOESN'T ORDER ME, MIKE. SHE'S MY FRIEND, NOVA'S GOOD PEOPLE!
YEAH, WELL... WE'LL SOON SEE ABOUT THAT!
"MIKE'S BEEN RIDING ME ABOUT YOU FOR WEEKS, NOVA. FOR SOME REASON, HE DOESN'T TRUST YOU. ER...DID YOU TWO HAVE A FIGHT?"
"WHEN AREN'T WE FIGHTING, ALEC?"
"OH. ANYWAY, I DECIDED TO DO A LITTLE SNOOPING-
"--ON MIKE! I WENT BACK TO THE OFFICE THAT NIGHT AND DUG THROUGH HIS DESK DRAWERS-
"-IN ITSELF AN ACT OF BRAVERY. BUT I FOUND SOMETHING...
"...MIKE'S CREDIT CARD RECEIPT FOR AN AIRLINE TICKET IN DONALD'S NAME TO BARRENTOWN!
"YOUR HOMETOWN!
ID CARD FORM 19-7
BOX KITE AIRLINES
"I WANTED TO TURN MAUSER'S TRENCH-COAT INTO DUST FOR THAT!
"THERE'S NO RULE THAT SAYS HE HAS TO LIKE YOU...BUT SPYING ON YOUR PAST IS SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER!
9

I DIDN'T GET AROUND TO IT RIGHT AWAY, THOUGH. WE BOTH GOT SIDETRACKED BY TYGER LILI AND HER SCHEME*--
*LAST ISSUE-MIKE
"BUT I HADN'T FORGOTTEN..."
...DAB'A LIVERWURST...JALAPIÑO PEPPERS...MUSTARD...
MAUSER! JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
MAKING BREAKFAST. WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE? ANYBODY CARE FOR SOME LEFTOVER SARDINES?
WHAT I WANT IS AN EXPLANATION FOR SENDING DONALD TO DIG INTO MY PAST!
SO WHAT? YOU GOT SOMETHING TO HIDE?
FIRSTLY, MY PAST IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
SECONDLY, BARRENTOWN CAN BE A DANGEROUS PLACE!
MAYBE WE OUGHT TO GO GET HIM, MIKE...BEFORE HE GETS INTO TROUBLE!
NAW. I GOT ME A CASE WORKING.
BUT DON'T LET ME... CHOMP... STOP YOU.


THEY DIDN'T. BUT BEFORE ALEC AND NOVA ARRIVED IN PENNSYLVANIA, EVENTS WERE BEGINNING TO PERCOLATE-
--FIRST BREWED HERE, AT BARRENTOWN'S HIGH SCHOOL...
ER...S'CUSE ME, MA'AM. I'M DONALD DUKE, A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR. ARE YOU MISS QUIVER?
YES, I AM, MR. DUKE. PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEAT.
SURE THING, MISS QUIVER. UH, REASON I'M HERE, Y'SEE...
SPEAK UP, YOUNG MAN. WE CAN'T HEAR YOU WHEN YOU MUMBLE!
ARE YOU THE SAME MISS QUIVER WHO ONCE TAUGHT KATRINKA KOLCNZSKI'S 9th GRADE CLASS?
THE KOLCNZSKI GIRL?!
WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THAT...THAT... HUSSY?
WELL, YOU SEE...WE'RE, ER... THAT IS...
HMMM
IT MUST HAVE BEEN TEN YEARS AGO...OH, ALL THE SORDID DETAILS WERE IN THE NEWSPAPERS...
...EVEN THAT BUSINESS WITH HER AND THAT VILE MOTORCYCLE GANG! SIMPLY DISGRACEFUL!
LATER, AT THE BARRENTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY...
...MUMBLE... TERRORIZED MOTORISTS... CYCLISTS NUMBERING IN THE DOZENS... MUMBLE MMM...
DINER
LIBRARY
...AH-HA! FOUND IT!... "ALSO ARRESTED FOR ARMED ROBBERY, WAS KATRINKA KOLCNZSKI, 16, OF RAMBLING WEED ROAD!"
OKAY, UNCLE MIKE...THIS IS WHAT YOU SENT ME FOR...!
11

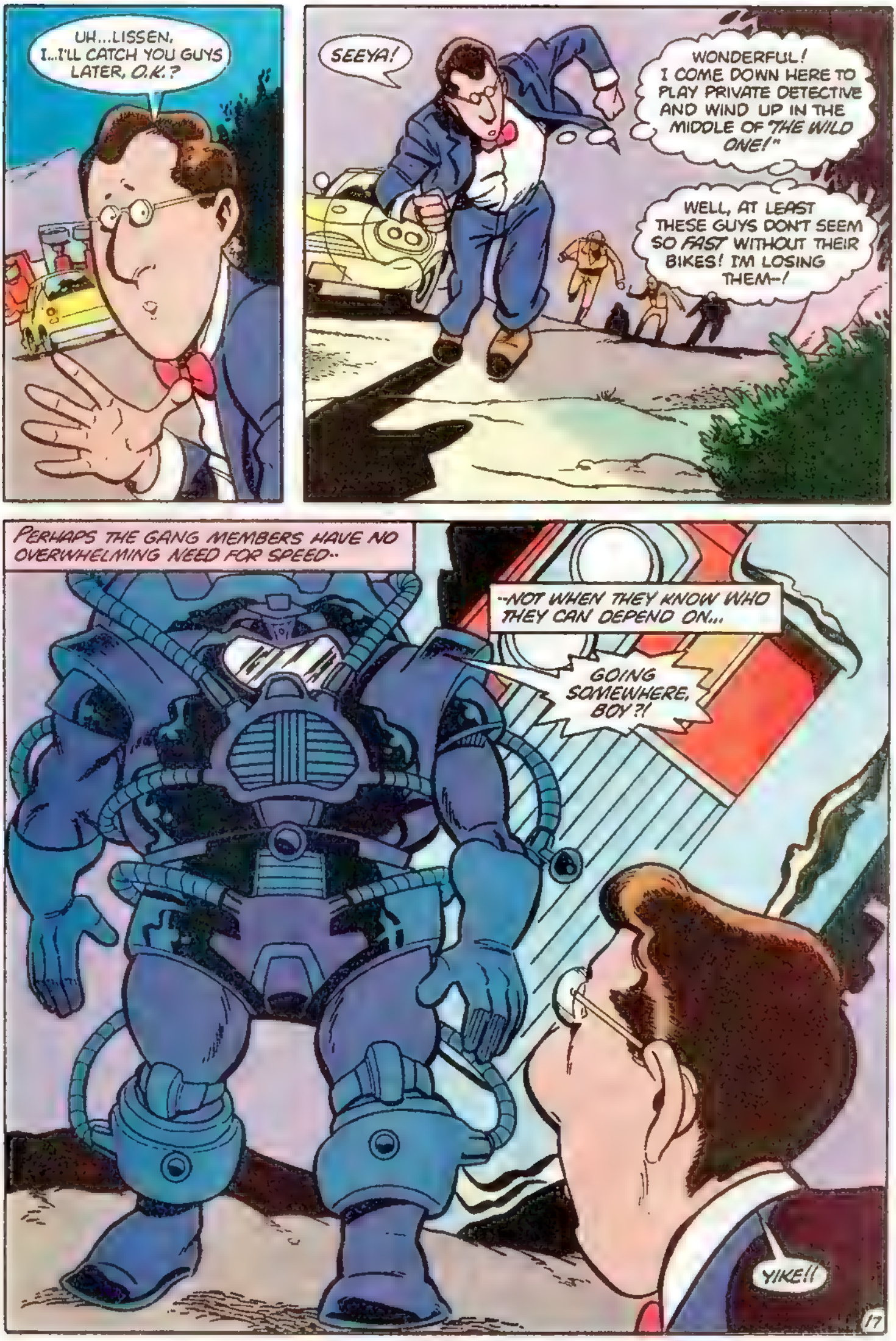

BUT THIS IS SOMETHING MAUSER HADN'T FORESEEN...
HIYA, BOSS. IT'S ME... LENNY! I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANNA KNOW, BOSS--
THERE'S SOME TWERP IN A SUIT NOSIN' AROUND... ASKIN' QUESTIONS ABOUT...
...KATRINKA!
WHAT?!? THIS COULD BE SERIOUS! I HADN'T RECKONED ON OUTSIDERS SHOWING UP--
--AND FOR HIS SAKE, LET'S HOPE HE DOESN'T GET TO FEEL THE WRATH OF...
--ESPECIALLY NOW! WE MUST MAKE CERTAIN THE BOYS IN THE GANG AREN'T COMPROMISED! KEEP AN EYE ON THIS PERSON, LENNY--
BLACKLUNG!
WOW! NOVA ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE SUCH A NICE LADY. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE SHE'S GOT A CRIMINAL PAST--
BUT HERE'S THE PROOF... NOVA BEING ARRESTED WITH A CYCLE GANG!
THERE'S SOMETHING THE PAPERS DIDN'T TELL, THOUGH...AND I GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT THAT IS!

WHICH, IN TURN, LEADS THE YOUNG SLEUTH HERE, TO 276 COAL DUST LANE, HOME OF...
LEONARD GAMBLE, SR?
THAT'S ME, ALRIGHT. YOU MUST BE THE GUY WHUT CALLED ME EARLIER!
YESSIR. AS YOU KNOW, I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE LOOKING INTO THE MATTER OF KATRINKA KOLCNZSKI AND HER ARREST TEN YEARS AGO.
YOU MEAN "OUR" ARREST, DON'T YOU, MR. DUKE? BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, FRIEND.
I'VE SINCE BECOME A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF THIS COMMUNITY!
KORN flakes
GAMBEL INSURANCE AGENCY
NO DOUBT OF THAT, MR. GAMBLE. BUT WHAT DID HAPPEN BACK THEN...?
JUST WHAT THE PAPERS SAID I RAN WITH THE SAME CYCLE GANG KATRINKA DID, AND WE WERE CAUGHT HOLDING UP A LIQUOR STORE!
I'VE BEEN STRAIGHT EVER... OH! ER... MR. DUKE, THIS HERE'S MY SON, LENNY JR.
CHARMED.
HMMMM... HAVEN'T I SEEN HIM SOMEWHERE BEFORE--?
I'M SURE,
UH-OH! BLACKLUNG'S GONNA WANNA KNOW ABOUT THIS!
SHORTLY...
...THAT'S RIGHT, BOSS... AND THEY'RE TALKIN' ABOUT THAT CHICK THAT USED'TA RIDE WITH THE HORNETS
I SEE, LENNY.
MR. DUKE IS GETTING ENTIRELY TOO CLOSE...

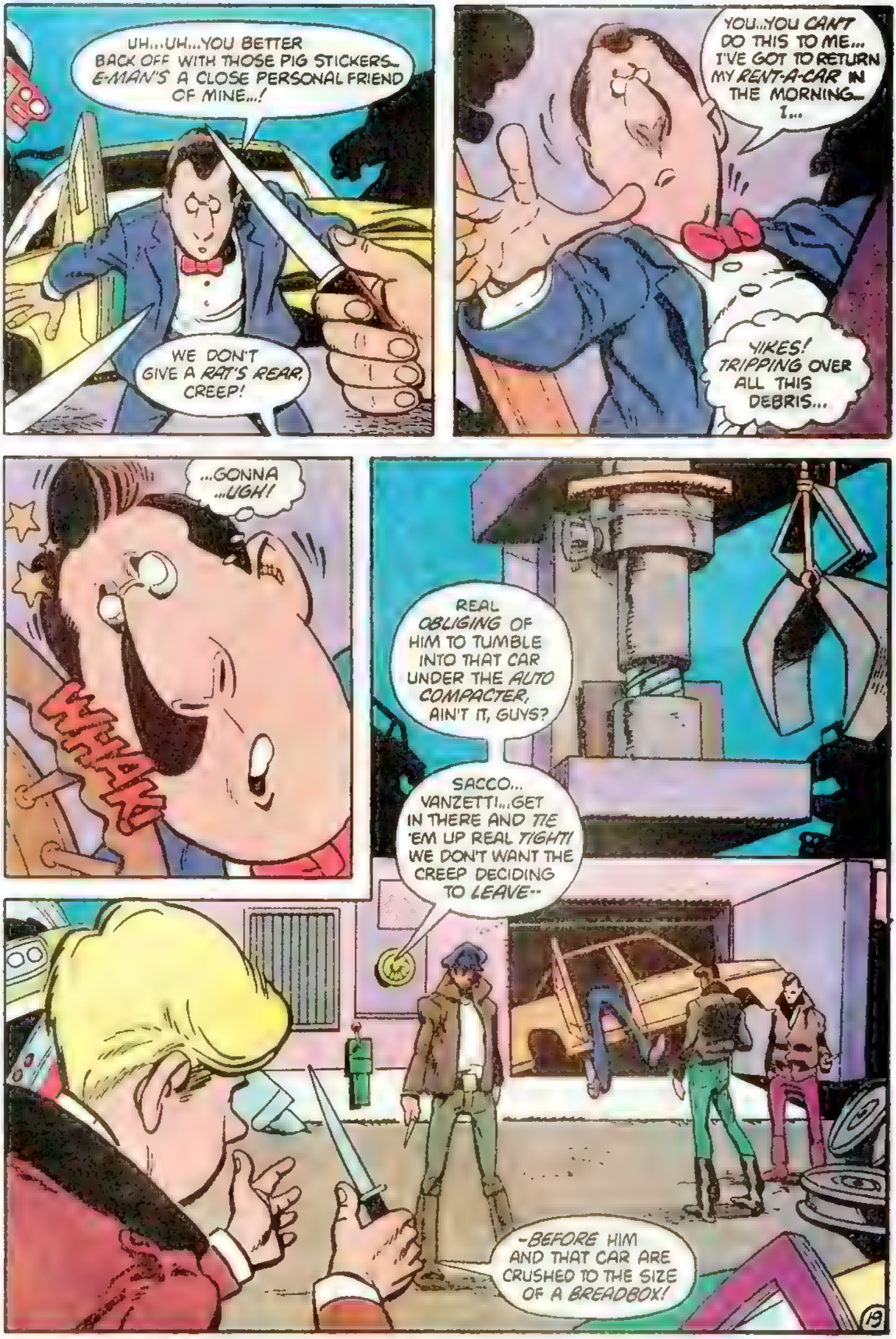
YOU SURE THERE'S NOTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT HER, MR. GAMBLE?
I...I'VE SAID ENOUGH, MR. DUKE. I'D REALLY RATHER JUST FORGET THAT WHOLE UGLY EPISODE OF MY LIFE...!
I'LL JUST BET YOU WOULD-!
HE'S GOIN', BLACKLUNG! WHAT'D YOU WANT I SHOULD DO?
WHY, STOP HIM, BOY-
-ANY WAY YOU SEE FIT!
GOTCHA, BOSS-
SNIK!
-AND THAT CREEP'S AS GOOD AS STOPPED!
TEE-HEE!
BUT ALL THAT WAS THEN. THE PRESENT, HOWEVER, IS NOWHERE NEAR AS INTERESTING AT THE MOMENT...
YEAH. I CAN'T REST UNTIL I KNOW IF DONALD'S ALRIGHT.
SO WHAT'RE WE SITTING AROUND HERE FOR, NOVA? GRAB YOUR HAT AND LET'S GET GOING!
14

INTRIGUING INTERLUDES:
THE INSTITUTE FOR WAYWARD WOMEN:
OVERCONFIDENT FOOLS! THOUGH TYGER LIL! IS YOUR PRISONER AT THE MOMENT--
--YOU SHAN'T HOLD ME FOR LONG!
THE SEWERS:
MAUSER... E-MAN... SLEEP THE SLEEP OF THE SAFE WHILE YOU CAN...
..'CAUSE I'M COMING TO GET YOU!
MOIST PALMS CLUB:
MIZ NOVA KANE?
SORRY, MISTER. SHE'S GONNA BE AWAY FER A WHILE.
WHEN SHE RETURNS, DEAR WOMAN, WOULD YOU SEE THAT SHE GETS THIS?
MEGAMEDIA
Broadcasting
633
Chica
INTERESTING INTERLUDES END!
15

MEANWHILE...
THAT DUKE FELLER? SEEMS I RECALL HIM SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT DRIVING OVER TO STRIP MINE PLACE-- A SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD CROSS TOWN.
THANKS.
STRIPMINE?! DONALD'S BEGGING FOR IT, ALEC. LET'S GO!
NIGHT. A RENTAL CAR ZIPS ALONG THE BACKROADS OF BARRENTOWN.
ITS SOLE OCCUPANT THINKS OF NOTHING BUT GETTING BACK TO HIS MOTEL AND SLEEPING.
HIS DESIRE'S ABOUT TO BE THWARTED...
...!%*?!!!%*D JACKKNIFED TRUCK BLOCKIN' THE ROAD...
...PERHAPS FOREVER!
HUH?!
ZZIIIP!
THAT KNIFE...PUNCTURED MY TIRE?!
THASS RIGHT, CITY BOY--
EEEP!
--AN' YER NEXT!
ULP!
16


UH...LISSEN, I...I'LL CATCH YOU GUYS LATER, O.K.?
SEEYA!
WONDERFUL! I COME DOWN HERE TO PLAY PRIVATE DETECTIVE AND WIND UP IN THE MIDDLE OF "THE WILD ONE!"
WELL, AT LEAST THESE GUYS DON'T SEEM SO FAST WITHOUT THEIR BIKES! I'M LOSING THEM--!
PERHAPS THE GANG MEMBERS HAVE NO OVERWHELMING NEED FOR SPEED..
--NOT WHEN THEY KNOW WHO THEY CAN DEPEND ON...
GOING SOMEWHERE, BOY?!
YIKE!!
17

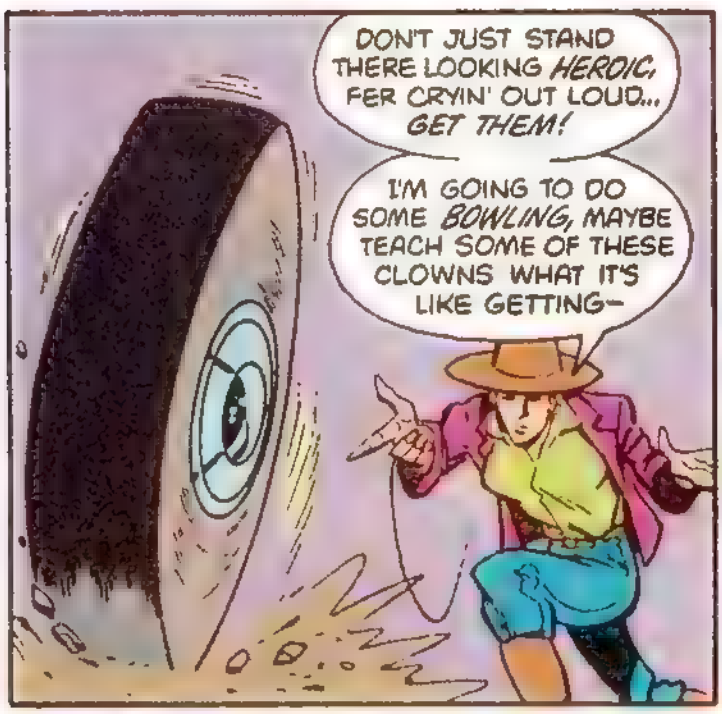
WE CAN PASS OVER THE NEXT FEW MINUTES AS THE BIKERS TREAT DONALD TO A GRAPHIC DEMONSTRATION OF THEIR FEELINGS TOWARDS HIM...
IT IS SAFE, HOWEVER, TO REJOIN THE SCENE A SHORT TIME LATER, AS THE BATTERED AND SEMI-CONSCIOUS DETECTIVE IS DELIVERED TO...
THE JUNKYARD! LET 'EM DOWN, GUYS!
W-WHERE AM I? WHO ARE YOU GUYS?
WHO AM I?
JUST 'CAUSE YOU LOOK THE PART DON'T MEAN YOU GOTTA ACT STUPID, MAN!
N-NO...I REMEMBER GETTING HIT ON THE HEAD... B-BUT I DON'T RECALL ANYTHING ELSE!
LOST YER MEMORY, HUH? POOR BABY!
SNIK!
GOOD THING I KNOW A WAY TO HELP REFRESH IT!
I'M AT THE JUNKYARD!
YOU'RE THE HELL'S HORNETS!
MY NAME IS DONALD DUKE.
HEY, YOU'RE RIGHT! HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME REMEMBER? HEH-HEH!
YUH CAN'T CREEP!


UH...UH...YOU BETTER BACK OFF WITH THOSE PIG STICKERS... E-MAN'S A CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE...!
WE DON'T GIVE A RAT'S REAR, CREEP!
YOU...YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME... I'VE GOT TO RETURN MY RENT-A-CAR IN THE MORNING... I...
YIKES! TRIPPING OVER ALL THIS DEBRIS...
...GONNA ...UGH!
WHAM
REAL OBLIGING OF HIM TO TUMBLE INTO THAT CAR UNDER THE AUTO COMPACTER, AIN'T IT, GUYS?
SACCO... VANZETTI...GET IN THERE AND TIE 'EM UP REAL TIGHT! WE DON'T WANT THE CREEP DECIDING TO LEAVE--
-BEFORE HIM AND THAT CAR ARE CRUSHED TO THE SIZE OF A BREADBOX!
19

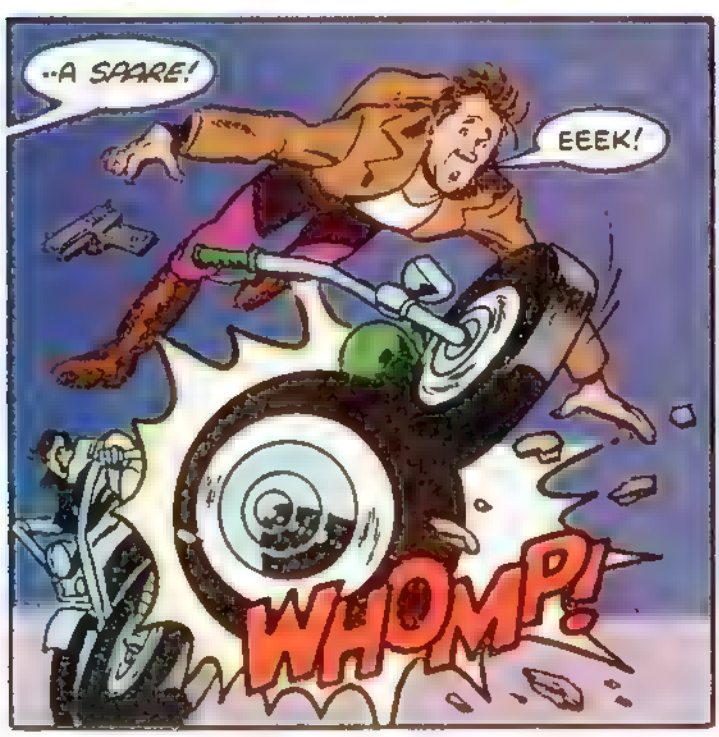
MEANWHILE...
WELL, WE'VE CHECKED OUT THE WHOLE TOWN, AND NOT A SIGN OF DONALD...!
YEAH, I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME WE TOOK OUR SEARCH TO THE AIR--
--COURTESY OF E-MAN EXPRESS!
UH...YOU WANT TO WATCH ALL THAT TWINKLING, ALEC... PEOPLE AROUND THESE PARTS MIGHT NOTICE SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
ONE CRACKLE OF ENERGY AND TRANSFORMATION LATER...
HEAD NORTH, ALEC. THERE ARE A COUPLE OF BACK ROADS WE HAVEN'T BEEN OVER YET.
SWOOOOSH!
AYE, AYE, MON CAPITAN!
AHHH... WHAT DID I TELL YOU...!
UH-HUH, AND IT FITS THE DESCRIPTION THE MOTEL CLERK GAVE US OF DONALD'S CAR!
FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS, NOVA-
"-WE'RE GOING IN FOR A LANDING!"
WEIRD! WHY WOULD DONALD LEAVE HIS CAR BEHIND JUST BECAUSE HE'S GOT A FLAT...
...ESPECIALLY WHEN THIS THINGS GOT A SPARE IN THE TRUNK?!
GOOD QUESTION. MAYBE...
SHHHH!
D-DO YOU HEAR THAT?
OH FUDGE! ANOTHER MOTOR-CYCLE...?
20

CORRECTION, E-MAN... LOTS OF MOTORCYCLES... ALL COMING FOR YOU!
THERE THEY IS!
C'MON, BOYS... WE OWE THEM TURKEYS FER WHAT THEY DONE TO US!

OH BOY, THE PERFECT ENDING TO A PERFECT DAY!
A BUNCH OF CYCLE CRAZIES HELLBENT ON VENGEANCE!
NOVA...?


DON'T JUST STAND THERE LOOKING HEROIC, FER CRYIN' OUT LOUD... GET THEM!
I'M GOING TO DO SOME BOWLING, MAYBE TEACH SOME OF THESE CLOWNS WHAT IT'S LIKE GETTING—

THAT'S ONE DOWN, LEAVING TWO FOR... YIKES!
GOOD GODFREY'S GOATEE ...I...I'M BEING SLAMMED WITH...
...SOOT?
SLUDGE!
21


...A SPARE!
EEEK!
WHOMP!

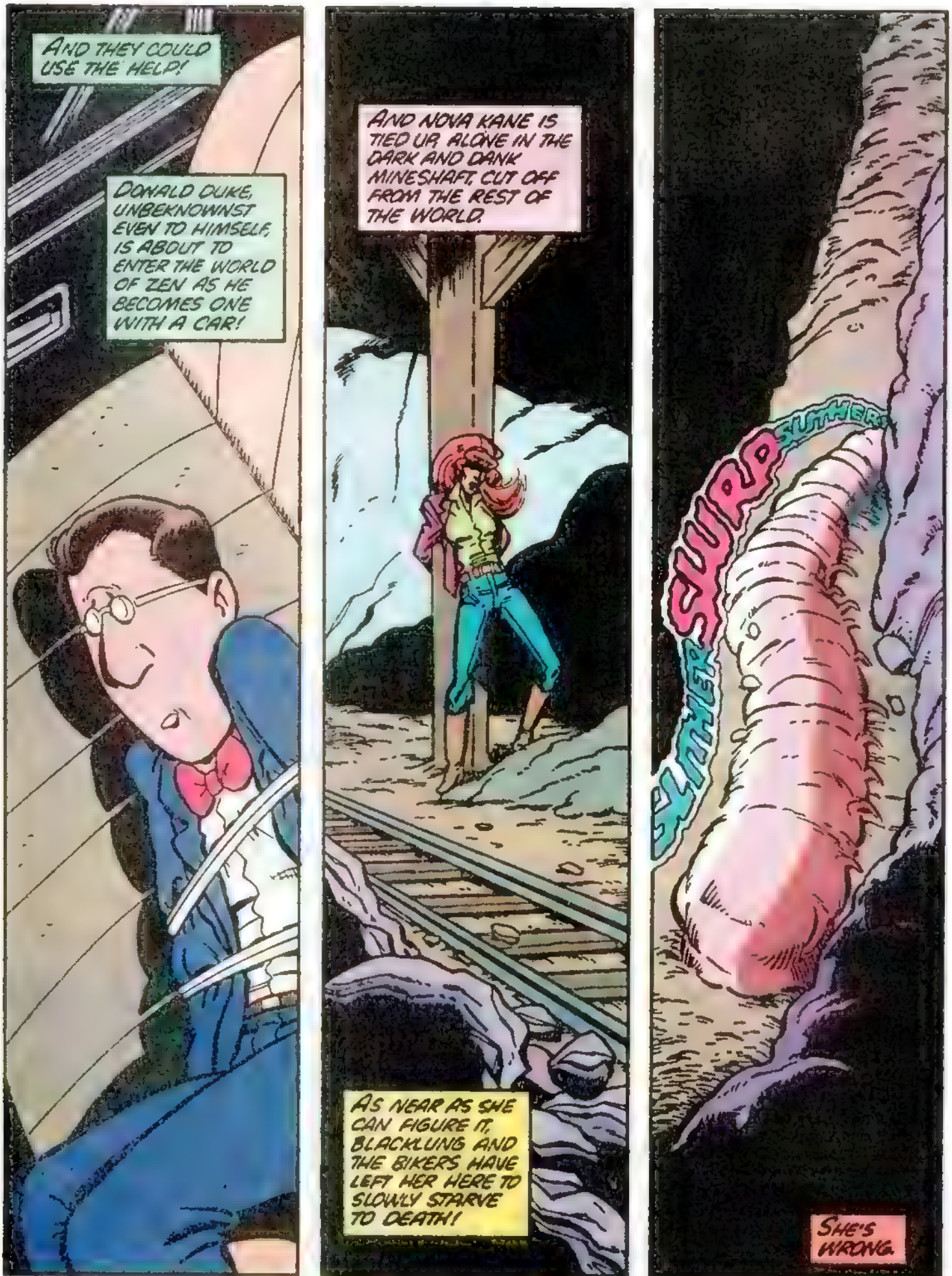
WHAK!
MUMPHF!
DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOT ALEC... EXCEPT THAT IT SMELLS LIKE BAYONNE ON A HOT DAY--
--AND THAT ALONE IS ENOUGH TO TELL ME IT'S GOT TO BE BAD NEWS!
HERE, FRIEND--I KNEW WE COULD, ER.."IRON" OUT OUR DIFFICULTIES!
NOT SOOT, HERO...COAL DUST! AND IT'S MINE TO COMMAND!
LUCKY... KOFF! KOFF!... YOU!
GOTTA HELP ALEC--
--BUT FIRST TO MAKE SURE THE BIKERS WON'T BE IN ANY SHAPE TO BOTHER ME!
BANG
KAPOW
BANG

YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT TO LOOK AT ME, BUT I'M NOT A WELL MAN!
ONCE, I WAS A MINE MANAGER...UNTIL I WAS TRAPPED BY MY "FRIENDS"--
--BUT NOW I'M KNOWN AS BLACK LUNG!
GHAK!
MY RATHER UNIQUE LUNGS ALLOW ME TO EXHALE THAT DUST IN THE FORM OF A WEAPON...
OR HAVE YOU ALREADY NOTICED THAT?
I HATE TO, ER...BUST YOUR BALLOON, BLACKLUNG--
--BUT THE ABILITY TO SPIT SCHMUTZ ISN'T MUCH OF A SUPER-POWER. NOT LIKE MINE...TOTAL CONTROL OVER THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF THINGS...MYSELF INCLUDED!
OH...I FIND MY ABILITIES ADEQUATE, E-MAN.
FWHUMP!

UH-OH... ALEC'S DOWN--
--AND IF I TURN MY BACK ON THESE THUGS TO HELP HIM, I'M DEAD MEAT!
AH-AH! NO SUDDEN MOVEMENTS, SONNY. THIS BABY'S LOADED!
SO'M I CHICKIE!
OOOOWWW!
NIK!
DON'T WEAR YOURSELF OUT STRUGGLING, E-MAN. THAT DUST'S SO CONCENTRATED IT MUST WEIGH SEVERAL TONS!
WHAT'D YOU WANT WE SHOULD DO WIT THE DAME, BLACKLUNG?
AHHH, THE LATE HERO'S LADY FRIEND--!

THOUGH I'M SURE YOU'D WILLINGLY SHARE YOUR FRIEND'S FATE, MY DEAR, I'VE GOT SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND FOR YOU!
TAKE HER TO SHAFT #7!
W-WHAT'S HAPPENED TO E-MAN...?!
ALEC!
ALEC! YOU'VE GOTTA HEAR ME... PLEASE!
SHADDUP CHICKIE! LET'S GO!
HER... HAIR...?!?
C-COULD IT BE...?
N-NO! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE... A MERE COINCIDENCE! I'D BETTER KEEP MY MIND ON THE JOB AT HAND--
-AND MAKE CERTAIN E-MAN'S DEAD!
WHAT! H-HE'S... GONE!

NO, GUESS AGAIN!
BUT YOU COULDN'T HAVE ESCAPED! I HAD YOU SQUASHED FLAT LIKE THE MISERABLE INSECT YOU ARE!
HOW CLEVER!
FUNNY YOU SHOULD MENTION INSECTS, CAUSE THAT'S JUST WHAT I CHANGED INTO TO CRAWL OUT FROM UNDER YOUR TRAP!
...NOW TRY CRAWLING OUT FROM UNDER THIS!
YOU'RE TRAPPED NOW, E-MAN! AS YOU WELL KNOW, COAL IS MADE OF CARBON...AND CARBON IS USED TO CONTAIN ENERGY. SUCH AS ELECTRICITY IN A LIGHTBULB--
--OR AN ENERGY MAN IN A CARBON ARC! HA HA HA!
UNNH! CAN HARDLY...MOVE...
...B-BUT...GOTTA GET...FREE...FOR NOVA AND DONALD'S SAKE...


AND THEY COULD USE THE HELP!
DONALD DUKE, UNBEKNOWNST EVEN TO HIMSELF, IS ABOUT TO ENTER THE WORLD OF ZEN AS HE BECOMES ONE WITH A CAR!
AND NOVA KANE IS TIED UP, ALONE IN THE DARK AND DANK MINESHAFT, CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD.
AS NEAR AS SHE CAN FIGURE IT, BLACKLUNG AND THE BIKERS HAVE LEFT HER HERE TO SLOWLY STARVE TO DEATH!
SLURP
SLURP
SHE'S WRONG.

Next Issue: Revelations!!

E-MAIL

%FIRST COMICS, 1014 DAVIS STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

First, a bit of belated mail from overseas

Dear Marty, Joe and Mike,

I love E-Man. From past experience I'm always very wary of humour comics as they are often not as funny as they purport to be. But after reading Plastic Man by Marty and Joe I thought that E-Man must at least be worth a try, and I was right.

Still, I don't suppose that E-Man will continue very long after number 3. I hope the lawsuits against you from Stan Lee, Jim Shooter, John Byrne and Marvel Comics don't cost you too much.

Seriously, this parody was great, in all ways, Joe's art on the F-Men being almost as good as Marty's scripting. So, 'till the Weasel has to have fillings ...

Terence Larkin
10 Drew Street
Brixham
Devon TQ5 9JU England

This provides a good opportunity to clean up a few comments received after the appropriate E-Mail columns went to press.

We got tons of mail hoping — pleading — for a return bout with the F-Men. We still get it. I'm not certain we're going to do it, but if we can pull off our double-top-secret master plan, you can bet you'll once again see at least one of the characters from **E-Man** *#2 and 3.*

We got quite a bit of mail wondering if Marvel was going to sue us. Well, Marvel didn't get sued for Not Brand Ecch — and Marvel isn't petty enough to sue us for poking them in the ribs a bit.

Besides, they know we'd love the publicity.

Now, on to **E-Man** *#6 ...*

Dear Mike,

I have been an avid E-Man fan since his arrival ten years ago. I am E-Man's and Joe Staton's biggest fan — and I'd challenge anyone on that. I am probably one of the few who even knows Nova Kane's real name (Katrinka Colchnzski, E-Man #2, Charlton run).

I do realize your sixth issue was not a put down of Christianity, and I am very happy to see a company actually put religious exploitators in their place! I get sick of people like Jerry Whatsisname telling people how to live. It bugs me the way money grubbing preachers jump on self-appointed crusades!

Anyway — I'm glad to hear that Einstein's passed away. Again.

By the way, why is it that E-Man had two right hands on the cover of Charlton's E-Man #6?

Jeffrey A. Cooke
1325-B Defence
Muskegon, MI 49441

You see, Jeffrey, way back in the Charlton days, **E-Man** *wasn't as familiar with your average Earthling as he is now, so in the heat of passion, he formed himself incorrectly, without using appropriate reference.*

He discovered his error when, sometime between the cover and page one, he ducked out to buy a pair of white gloves with those little lines down the back (you can get them cheap from Walt Disney Productions) and, much to his embarrassment, found out he had his left thumb in the wrong place.

And I'll bet you thought being a comic book editor was easy!

Dear Martin, Joe and Mike,

E-Man #6 was the best issue produced in several months. The absence of Herr Einstein was a real plus. The script featured humor, sarcasm, parody and satire, but, thankfully, this time we weren't bombarded with the stuff. There was also some relatively straight, serious and dramatic moments in this issue.

This issue's foes were also a cut above many of those presented in previous issues. Even silly foes need to offer a feeling of threat, danger and menace. The unique format of E-Man readily allows for a great variety of villains.

But the real highlight of the issue was its revelations of new aspects of E-Man's origin and history. This new dimension helps eliminate one of the prime weaknesses in the original Charlton version: how could E-Man have possessed such command of his powers and have such vast knowledge of existing shapes, forms, abilities and the like if he had previously existed only in a void?

Wallace Lee Hopkins
Box 428
Glen Carbon, IL 62034

Dear Mike, Marty and Joe,

In spite of the lack of Einstein, the re-hash of E-Man's origin, and Donald Duke, I was rather pleased with E-Man #6.

I liked the full-issue story. Your back-up features have always been very good but I still like the book-length stories from time to time.

I liked Thoughtmaster #1. As I mentioned in my last letter I would like to see E-Man develop some villains that are as strange and as funny as he is.

I liked Debbe Webbe leaving the comic. I nearly opened a bottle of celebration wine.

I even liked the Hembeck page. Just when I was ready to gag over another "Hostess" parody, Hembeck comes up with the best I've seen so far.

T.E. Pouncey
Wichita, Kansas

Then you should be glad to know Bruce Patterson's page in the back of this

issue is the last, T.E. We were having fun — and we've got a lot of good ideas left over — but we figure ten is enough.

By the way, it was nice meeting you at last July's Kansas City Con, T.E.

Dear Marty, Joe and Mike:

Thanks for getting rid of Einstein. Hey, how about Steve Gerber's Destroyer Duck, or the little guy in a Mostest Ad.

John Brittan
11 Fleetwood Dr.
Daly City, CA 94015

John, meet T.E., T.E. meet John.

Marty,

At last. I enjoyed the satire on the X-Men and the one on Steven Spielberg, but with the coming of Gantry Babbitt you have the possibility of doing some real satire. The funny thing is, Gantry Babbitt seems all too real.

I think the interesting thing will be to see how you handle E-Man and Nova's relationship. I really, honestly, could not tell if the first two pages were serious or funny. It certainly is adult ("But ... why can't we just *enjoy* each other?"), but I have to wonder if that will fit into this book.

By the way, might I put in a good word for Albert Einstein. Having a series narrated by a dead physicist is strange enough, but Einstein himself, along with the goofy dialogue, fits perfectly with the rest of the series. Think of it this way: if you can have an alien end up on Earth who is actually energy in the form of a human being, why can't Albert Einstein narrate the stories?

It only makes sense.

Mike Sopp
438 W. 32
Erie, PA 16508

Well, ol' Albert might be gone, Mike, but I'm certain you'll love his replacement. Yep, make way for the new E-Man narrator ... Evita Peron!

Hey Guys,

I have just read in one of comic fandom's many periodicals that Martin Pasko is leaving E-Man. I'm sure you have your reasons for this decision, and I'm sure that said reasons are very good, but I would really like you to reconsider. Marty Pasko and E-Man go together so well that it would be a shame to see anyone but Mr. Pasko writing the book.

Issue #6 is a perfect example. "Feed Me" was typical, off-the-wall E-Man at its best. Marty's zany approach to E-Man is unlike anyone else's.

Joseph A. Lieb
LT 32, RD #1
Harvey's Lake, PA 18618

Marty's taken something of a temporary leave of absence from comics entirely to handle the Mr. T cartoon series. He's expected to return to DC Comics on alternating issues of Star Trek.

After the conclusion of this two-parter, Joe Staton will be returning to the complete writing chores and he'll be bringing Tyger Lili back with him.

NEXT MONTH you'll discover how Nova Kane's sordid past is tied up with the secret of Blacklung ... and how Blacklung just might be responsible for "The Slug That Ate Barrentown!"

You'll also be on hand for the opening of "Michael Mauser's Crimestompers Textbook!"

Can you take it?

— Mike Gold

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THE ORIGINS OF "INDEPENDENT" COMICS PART 2

by CHARLES MEYERSON

You may have a hard time believing it — after buying this comic at a store where the owner actually *reads* and *likes* comics — but there was a time when most fans bought their comics at places where the people behind the counter (and the magazine distributors behind *them*) didn't know Superman from Spider-Man.

That was before Mike Friedrich founded *Star*Reach* — probably the first commercially distributed comic book specifically aimed at the fan market.

*Star*Reach* took the idea of creator-owned material championed by Wally Wood's *Witzend* (see last month's opening installment) and made it more available to fans than ever before.

IN 1972, FRIEDRICH was an experienced fan-turned-pro, with writing credits for Batman, Iron Man and Green Lantern, among others. Living in California's Bay area near San Jose, he was then one of the few comics pros residing outside the New York area. That isolation from the heart of the comics industry may have added to his insight.

"For years, I'd been visiting Bob Sidebottom's Comic Collector Shop, one of the first specialty stores in the country," Friedrich recalls. "I'd picked up a lot about the problems of distribution through the standard system.

"At the time, DC and Marvel had no interest in providing material he could sell, beyond what they were already doing. They weren't interested in his opinions because he was one store and he didn't count. Being a *comics* store, he *even more* didn't count, because he was dealing with 'the fans.'"

That was also about the time Jim Steranko was shucking a praise-studded career as a Marvel artist and writer to form his own publishing company, Supergraphics, which now publishes the media-magazine *Prevue*. And the underground comix business was in full flourish, with creators owning their material and collecting royalties from publishers — like the book and record industries.

So, Friedrich says, he began to sense opportunity knocking. "I had some contacts with artists and writers. I figured there was a big enough market through distributors like Bud Plant and Phil Seuling to put something out and see if it would work."

*STAR*REACH* #1 came out in 1974, a black-and-white comic-book-size publication whose color cover featured the adventures of Howard Chaykin's "Cody Starbuck," a Han Solo-kind-of-guy (pre-Star Wars). The back cover featured Jim Starlin's fable, "The Birth of Death." (In a stab at equal time, Starlin also contributed a one-page account of "The Origin of God.") In three reprintings, the Starlin piece won the front cover position.

A lot of stores displayed *Star*Reach* side-by-side with the undergrounds. But Friedrich says he tried to keep his distance: "I knew I didn't have much of an underground market, because I was trying to do mainstream, fantasy/adventure material."

Eventually, someone suggested Friedrich use the word *ground-level* to set his product apart from the undergrounds and the "above-ground" titles from Marvel and DC. He says it may have been a put-down, but he used it to promote Star*Reach Productions.

Now, he says, it's useless: "For one thing, the undergrounds have pretty much disappeared. And the range of work from different publishers is now very broad. *Ronin* by Frank Miller... DC would not have published that 10 years ago. An underground publisher might not have published it 10 years ago, either, because it would have been too straight. An *alternative* publisher would have had to publish it.

"But that type of product now is an accepted part of DC's product line. So you don't need to create a distinction between yourself and DC. It gets created within each company."

*STAR*REACH* WAS HOME to the work of a lot of Marvel and DC's most respected talent: Neal Adams, Len Wein, Dick Giordano, Steve Leialoha, Frank Brunner, Joe Staton, Lee Marrs and P. Craig Russell — whose series, "Parsifal," (with Patrick C. Mason) Star*Reach Productions later collected and reprinted in color. Same with Chaykin's "Starbuck" series.

*Star*Reach* was probably the first of the ground-level or "direct sale" comics to use interior color. Issues 12 through 15 (the last before *Star*Reach* grew to magazine-size) featured a few such pages.

Friedrich admits what he calls his biggest mistakes: He turned down the chance to publish what would become two of today's most successful direct sales comics, *Cerebus* by Dave Sim and *Elfquest* by Wendy and Richard Pini. "I should have listened more to distributors. I should have been able to tell *Elfquest* had a market. I didn't. Dave Sim had been working for me for a while, but when he proposed *Cerebus*, I passed. I take *some* credit for giving the Pinis and Dave advice on how to set up their own publishing companies, although, of course, they actually did it themselves."

Eventually, the cost of experimenting with color and other money problems pulled *Star*Reach* under. In 1979, Friedrich left publishing reluctantly. But he says he doesn't regret developments since.

After *Star*Reach* folded, he took his know-how to Marvel, as its first direct sales manager — developing the "Baxter book" and co-developing with Jim Shooter the "graphic novel" format. At the same time, he was using his connections to develop what's become the comics' first "talent agency," Star*Reach Productions, to represent writers and artists who want to keep control of the material they create. He left Marvel last year to do that full-time. He's now responsible for packaging the "Elric" adaptations published by Marvel and Pacific, as well as Eclipse's *DNAgents*.

"I'M DEDICATED NOW to fulfilling a lot of the dreams I had in the late '60s and early '70s: Winning more control and responsibility for creative people.

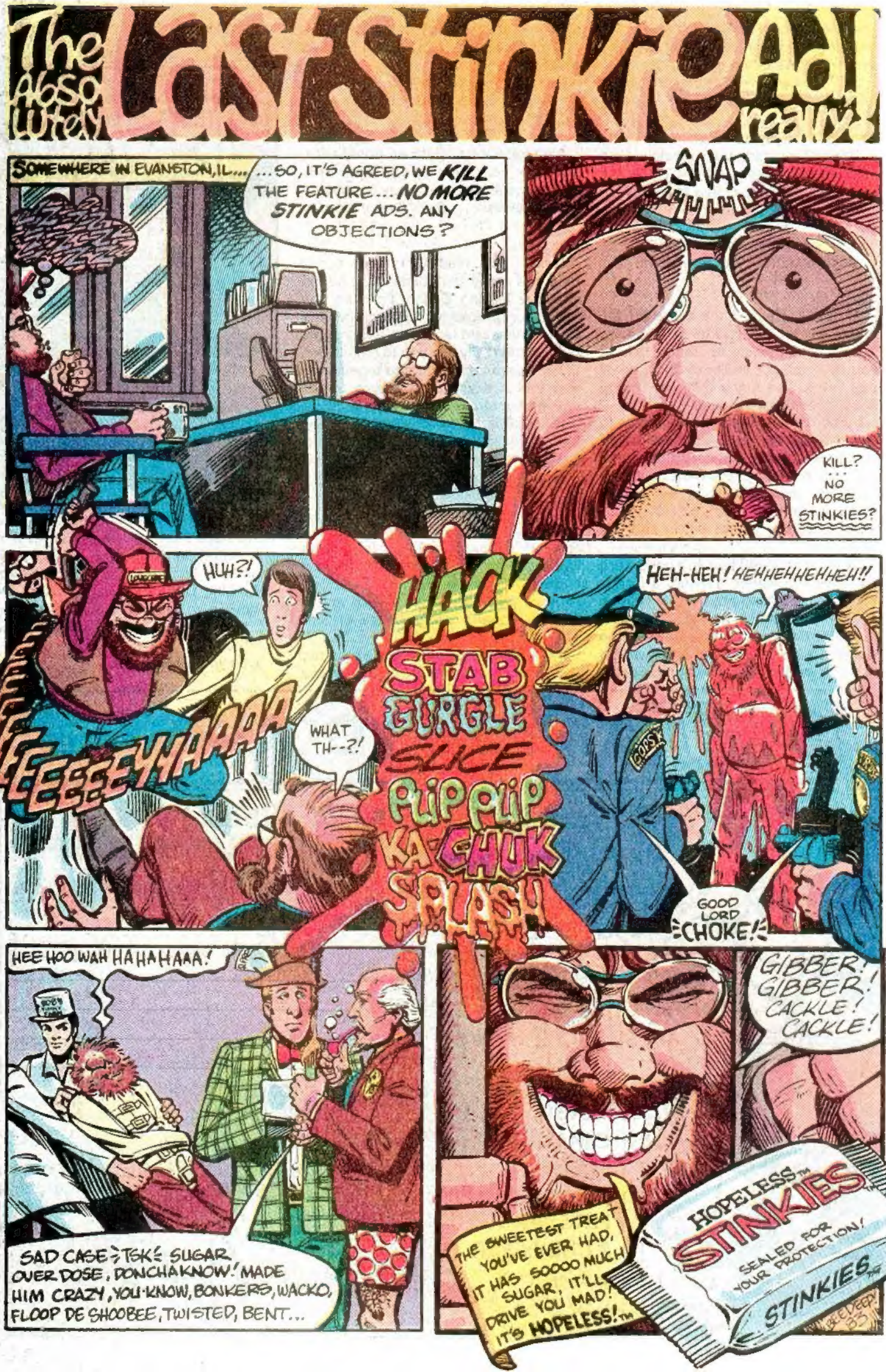
"I can't tell you how excited I am. I see more possibility for comics publishing than I believe has existed at any other time in the business. The relationship between publishers and the readers is much closer than it's ever been. I see more publishers entering the field. *Book* publishers I'm dealing with are starting to look at the comics business as another avenue."

And Friedrich claims a lot of the credit for that shift.

"I BELIEVE *STAR*REACH* paved the emotional path... to go in this direction. I was the first publisher to say that these specialty stores and distributors count, and that — if you listen to them — you can make a lot of money publishing for their market."

Mike Friedrich's not alone, admiring his accomplishments. Just ask any of us who used to buy our comics from people who looked at us funny.

(Charles Meyerson wishes to thank Larry Charet of Larry's Comic Book Store in Chicago for loaning him a set of the original run. Meyerson, of course, is *still* a reporter for WXRT Radio (93.1 FM) in Chicago.)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STAB
GURGLE
SLICE
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KA-CHUK
SPLASH
HEH-HEH! HEHHEHHEHHEH!!
GOOD LORD
CHOKE!
HEE HOO WAH HAHAHAAA!
SAD CASE? TSK! SUGAR OVERDOSE, DONCHAKNOW! MADE HIM CRAZY, YOU KNOW, BONKERS, WACKO, FLOOP DE SHOOBEE, TWISTED, BENT...
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